

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Paula Lahey
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About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the *Inspections of children's homes – framework for inspection* (March 2011) and the evaluation schedule for children's homes.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service that exceeds minimum requirements

Satisfactory: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is registered to provide a home and a short break service for up to nine children of both sexes between the ages of 8 to 18 years who have a learning disability.

This home is a detached period property set within with extensive grounds in a village setting. To the ground floor there are a number of communal areas that offer living space, dining facilities, recreational and leisure opportunities. There are adapted bathing, showering and toilet facilities to meet the needs of children and young people who use wheelchairs and have some mobility needs. There are nine single bedrooms situated on the first floor and some of the bedrooms have overhead tracking fitted to meet the specific needs of some children. There is a second fully adapted bathroom and toilet facilities to this floor. The first floor is accessed by a lift and there are mobile hoist and adapted equipment to meet specific needs.

The home has a large garden area offering ample play areas and a covered play area. There is transport provided to take children and young people on social and leisure activities.

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **satisfactory**.

Children and young people are happy in their environment and it is apparent that the staff team aim to ensure that they have a good time during their short break visit. This is generally achieved with satisfactory outcomes where children and young people are cared for and supported in a safe environment. Many children have complex health needs and require support in everyday life and activities. Staffing levels are sufficient to meet the needs of the young people who use this service.

Positive feedback has been received from placing authorities and parents in relation to the care and support provided to children and young people, particularly the flexibility the service demonstrates and effective communication.

The registered manager demonstrates an understanding of the areas for development; a competent and committed registered individual and senior management team appropriately supports him. A number of areas that require addressing in order to improve the quality of service provided have been identified. Activities that children and young people engage in need effective planning in order to ensure they are purposeful and fulfilling. Staff have additional training needs relating to using a total communication approach and use of specialist communication aids. Formal supervision is not provided consistently, with the

timescales detailed in the service policy and handover meetings do not enable the staff team to receive clear direction and planning opportunities. Children and young people's cultural needs are not thoroughly reflected in care plans, and some documentation is not kept up-to-date, this is particularly in regards to risk assessments. Records relating to the use of restraint do not consistently detail techniques used to de-escalate behaviour.

There are some weaknesses in the administration of medication and the checking of visitors to the service. Written development plans with goals and objectives for improvement and an annually updated learning and development programme may be beneficial for all staff to work towards. The service demonstrates a capacity to improve. This is evident from the action taken to address the requirements and recommendations from the previous inspection and although they have not been fully met progress has been made.

Areas for improvement

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
27 (2001)	ensure that all staff employed at the home receive regular formal supervision and an annual appraisal. (Regulation 27 (4) (a)).	31/08/2011
21 (2001)	Ensure that there are suitable arrangements for the safe administration of all medicines received into the home; this relates in particular to ensuring that all medicine is received in its original packaging and contains a clearly identifiable prescription label (Regulation 21 (b))	15/07/2011
17B (2001)	Ensure that the records of the use of restraint include details of any methods used to avoid the need to use that measure. (Regulation 17B (4)(b))	01/08/2011

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that children and young people are able to enjoy their interests, develop confidence in their skills and are supported and encouraged by staff to engage in leisure activities (NMS 7)

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- ensure that all children and young people communicate their views on all aspects of their care and support. This specifically relates to staff having the training and skills to communicate effectively (NMS 1.3)
 - ensure that staff are equipped with the skills required to meet the needs of the children and young people. In particular, this relates to the use of specialist communication aids and knowledge of communication systems (NMS 18.1)
 - ensure that records contribute to an understanding of the child's life. In particular this relates to the identification and documentation of a child's cultural, religious, and racial needs (NMS 22)
 - ensure that the registered person has a written development plan, reviewed annually, for the future of the home, either identifying any planned changes in the operation or resources of the service, or confirming the continuation of the home's current operation and resource (NMS 15.2)
 - ensure that staff are supported and guided to fulfil their roles and provide a high quality service to children. In particular this relates to handover and team meetings providing clear direction and expectations of staff and enable time for effective planning of the immediate and forthcoming shifts (NMS 19)
 - ensure that all unchecked visitors are adequately 'chaperoned' when on the home's premises (NMS 4.8)
 - ensure risk assessments are carried out to identify any potential sources of harm to the children and are recorded in writing and are regularly reviewed (NMS 10.8)
 - ensure that children receive personalised care that promotes all aspects of their identity. In particular this relates to the location of medication administration (NMS 2.1)
 - ensure the learning and development programme is evaluated for effectiveness and updated at least annually. (NMS 18.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for children and young people are **satisfactory**.

Parents, placing authorities and staff report that children and young people enjoy their short break visits. They are cared for by dedicated staff in a safe environment.

The primary responsibility for supporting health care needs remains with parents as young people stay for only short break placements at this home. Medical needs are identified and reflected in individual health and care plans. The service works closely with the community nursing team to provide staff with specialist training in complex medical skills such as administering emergency seizure medication and gastrostomy feeding. All staff have current first aid and food hygiene certificates. This good level of training ensures staff are competent at addressing children and young people's diverse health needs and contributes to the enjoyment of a healthy lifestyle. Children and young people are required to visit the medication room in order to have medicines administered. For some children and young people this disrupts mealtimes, bedtimes, and relaxation times. This does not promote a person centred approach to care giving and the procedure has not been reviewed in order to determine whether it remains a proportionate and appropriate response to administering medication. The service closely monitors young people's health during stays and responds promptly to any emerging health concerns.

Young people and staff generally eat together round large dining tables, which promotes a positive social occasion and develops young people's skills with waiting, turn taking and making choices. Young people are provided with a high quality, balanced and varied diet, which reflects their needs, personal preferences and any specialist dietary requests. Cultural, racial and religious requirements are provided during assessment; however, this information is not consistently transferred into care plans. This limits the opportunity for staff to support children and young people to develop a knowledge and understanding of their heritage and background.

Children and young people benefit from well established relationships between the service and families. Key workers support children and young people to maintain contact with parents during their stay and also complete communication dairies to ensure a shared understanding of children's daily lives.

Care and placement plans identify the methods of communication used for each child and young person. The service has trained two staff in the local total communication approach, and they are providing additional guidance and training for the remaining staff team. However, staff are not using these emerging skills consistently or confidently and this limits meaningful and effective communication with some children and young people. There is good provision of symbol documentation available within the home and children and young people bring individual communication aids on their visits. Not all staff are confident at producing and using these resources and this restricts the opportunities to consult with children and young people who use this means of communication.

This service has the resources to provide a range of activities in-house and the use of a minibus to access the community. There are trips out to local parks, restaurants, and local places of interest. However, the staff lack creativity and fail to regularly utilise the resources available to offer a full programme of activities. There is minimal

planning given to activities and therefore they often lack purpose.

Children receive full time education and the organisation promotes good communication between the school and the service. This is further supported by staff attending education reviews as appropriate. In addition, the organisation has set up a school liaison service providing monthly visits to the allocated schools. This is in order to observe children and young people in their school environment and liaise closely with education and support staff to discuss individual needs and ensure a consistent approach to care giving is provided. This positive initiative is already developing staff knowledge and, which in turn, leads to improved outcomes for children and young people.

Quality of care

The quality of the care is **satisfactory**.

Staff work in partnership with parents, professionals and schools to assess children's needs prior to accessing the service. Together they draw up care plans, protocols and agree a package of care.

Children have a tailor made transition which includes visiting the service to meet staff and join in with activities before building up to an overnight stay; this helps to develop children's confidence and trust in the staff. The service demonstrates a flexible approach to accommodating requests for specific stays and supporting families during a crisis or emergency. Placing social workers feel this is a significant strength of the service and this is supported by comments from families.

There is a minimal approach to seeking the views of children and young people to influence the running of the service, but individual choice is established in relation to food and activities. The children and young people use various methods of communication, however, staff skills and experience to support these individual needs is variable.

There is a clear procedure in place to store, administer, and manage children's medication and this is understood by staff that are responsible in this area. Medication training is provided and staff are currently having their competency assessed to ensure best practice. Some medication is not supplied in the original box containing the prescription label. It is not clear that this has been challenged by the service and results in medication being administered to children and young people without robust checking.

Children and young people can take part in a range of activities and the premises have ample indoor and outdoor space. The secure garden has a bouncy castle, sensory garden, with sufficient room and facilities to freely ride bikes and play games. There is a soft play area and resources for arts and craft, music and games. A 'snoozlum' provides stimulation with light, sound and texture and there is a computer room with touch screen facilities and adapted equipment, enabling all children and young people to access the provision.

The home has a complaints procedure that is presented in an accessible format in an attempt to ensure that it can be understood by the children and young people. The home has taken account of and acted upon lessons learnt from complaints.

Case files are in place for each child and although they are individualised the quality of information recorded is variable. A percentage of care plans, individual risk assessments, and daily records do not fully reflect children and young people's assessed needs and the actual care provided. Senior and experienced staff have started to review and update case files; this is having a positive impact on the quality of information recorded.

The home is a period property and is decorated, maintained, and furnished to an adequate standard. It has overhead tracking installed and specialist equipment to assist in delivering personal care needs. The passenger lift provides access throughout the building and there is plenty of space for wheelchair users. The staff team are keen to provide a homely environment; this is evident in their efforts in

maintaining the upkeep of bedrooms and the garden. Families are pleased with the resources available and comment that it has enabled their child to have the freedom to safely explore and play.

Safeguarding children and young people

The service is **satisfactory** at keeping children and young people safe and feeling safe.

Placing social workers and families report confidence in the service for keeping children and young people safe. Examples include the staff team supporting children's complex health needs, enabling appropriate risk taking and proactively challenging transport practices to ensure young people's safety when travelling.

Children enjoy sound relationships and interact positively with staff and others. The service promotes a positive culture of managing behaviour; sanctions are not used and there is a focus on encouragement, praise, and de-escalation. Staff receive regular training in an approved method of physical intervention and are knowledgeable about how to use these practices appropriately. The use of restraint is minimal and used appropriately to ensure children and young people are safe from danger, however, records do not consistently document techniques used to de-escalate behaviour so it is not clear that it has been used as a last resort.

Sufficient staffing ratios provide a level of supervision where incidents of any children and young people going missing, or incidents of bullying are negated. Areas of the premises and places in the community have been subject to risk assessments and staff are knowledgeable about the particular vulnerabilities of the children and young people who use this service. However, a number of risk assessments have not been recently reviewed and signed. Consequently staff may be referring to out-of-date information on a young person, or an activity.

The policies and procedures in relation to safeguarding are readily available. Staff receive training on safeguarding and they recognise the particular vulnerabilities relating to the diverse needs of young people with disabilities and take appropriate action to address them. Referrals and issues of concern are reported promptly to the local safeguarding board. The organisation adopts a robust procedure to employ new staff following safer recruitment practices.

Staff are aware of their responsibilities to monitor and vet visitors to the home and this process is generally adhered to. However on two occasions recently, visitors have accessed the property without sufficient challenge and checking of identification. This puts children at potential risk.

The environment is adequately maintained and issues of health and safety are monitored. Regular servicing ensures the safety of appliances such as hoists, adaptable beds, electrical appliances and the fire detection system. Fire drills are carried out routinely and where appropriate involve young people. Staff have the opportunity to develop skills for safe management of an evacuation through the use of scenario training. This is a positive initiative.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the children's home are **satisfactory**.

The home is managed by a suitably qualified and experienced manager who has the support from a strong and effective responsible individual and senior management team. Managers and team leaders keep up-to-date with new information and legislation and this is discussed with staff during regular team meetings.

The recommendations raised at the last inspection have been fully acted upon. The fire risk assessment has been updated and is available to staff through the on-line intranet system. The log of complaints appropriately records actions taken and the outcome of any investigations. The requirement regarding staff receiving regular supervision has not been fully addressed as practice remains inconsistent for some staff. This therefore remains a requirement for the home to ensure that staff are supervised in line with the service policy.

Children and young people and families are provided with written information about the service which summarises appropriate details from the home's Statement of Purpose. Information for children and young people uses simple language and symbols.

Young people's privacy is protected by ensuring that confidential records are kept in locked cabinets with restricted access. There are regular visits under regulation 33 of the Children's Homes Regulations, and the registered manager undertakes regulation 34 checks on a regular basis.

Staff feel supported by senior staff and benefit from regular team meetings enabling the opportunity to discuss key issues, strategies for supporting children and young people and sharing practice. Annual appraisals are carried out in order to review staff's performance; however formal supervision is not undertaken to the level determined within the service's policy. Handovers between shifts occur but they are not utilised fully to ensure the staff team are provided with clear direction and the opportunity for effective shift planning.

The service provides a detailed induction programme which requires new staff to work alongside more experienced staff and to complete a knowledge and skills booklet, thus evidencing their level of understanding of the service and how to support the children and young people. Mandatory training is delivered and regularly updated. However training needs are detailed in individual staff files and systems do not currently allow for the whole team and organisation learning and development plan to be evaluated. Staff report that mandatory and health intervention training is sufficient to equip them with the skills to support children and young people with complex needs, however feel less confident in using specialist communication aids and providing a total communication approach.

There is a clear local authority strategic plan in place to identify long term aims and objectives of children's provision, however, this does not sufficiently ascertain the services individual strengths and weaknesses and areas for development.

Equality and diversity practice is **satisfactory**.